***Press* Release**

The Meteorological Office

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A millennium weather service from The Met. Office

A major factor for anyone handling events and incidents as 1999 rolls into the new millennium will be the weather. With this in mind, The Met. Office has launched its Millennium Weather Service to help government departments, the emergency authorities and other members of the National Infrastructure Forum in planning for this busy period.

Initially, the service provides statistical weather data indicating the typical weather conditions that might be expected across the UK in late December and early January. This will include an illustration of the expected frequency of various types of disruptive weather in different towns and cities at that time of year. Examples of disruptive weather might be significant rain or severe gales, both of which have affected parts of the UK over recent Christmas and New Year holidays.

Closer to the millennium, the statistics will be followed by weather forecasts containing more detail and increasing levels of confidence. A 30-day trend forecast will be issued in late November, and from mid-December 10-day forecasts will be issued on a daily basis for each of 30 different areas of the UK. The gap between the statistical data, and the 30-day trends will be bridged by an experimental seasonal outlook

The information provided will mainly centre on conurbations around the country; however, in view of the fact that people will be undertaking activities on hills and mountains over the holiday, statistics and forecasts will also be produced for major upland regions such as the Scottish Highlands, and the Lake District. All elements of the Millennium Weather Service will be complemented by weather warnings supplied as part of the normal National Severe Weather Warning Service.

Roger Stobbs, Public Met. Service Manager at The Met. Office said: "Like most people we hope that the weather doesn't produce too many surprises over the millennium. However, our Millennium Weather Service will help the authorities be proactive and plan resources to stay one step ahead of any difficulties that the weather may cause."

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